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Claim Amendments:

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This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-39 (Canceled).

40. (Previously Presented) A ceramic component, comprising:

a ceramic body comprising silicon carbide and an oxide layer, said oxide layer containing an amorphous matrix phase comprising silica and a crystalline phase provided in the amorphous matrix phase, the crystalline phase comprising anisotropically-shaped crystals comprising at least one of alumina and an aluminosilicate.

41. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the ceramic body comprises nitride bonded silicon carbide.

42. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 41, wherein the ceramic body comprises silicon carbide as a primary component, and silicon nitride as a secondary component.

43. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 42, wherein the ceramic body comprises about 5 to about 35 wt% silicon nitride.

44. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 41, wherein the ceramic body has a porosity within a range of about 5 to about 25 vol%.

45. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 41, whercin the ceramic body is formed by reacting a green body with nitrogen while heating, the green body containing silicon carbide and silicon.

46. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 45, wherein the green body is formed by slip casting a slurry containing silicon carbide and silicon, forming a cast, and drying the cast.

47. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the ceramic component is a refractory component.

48. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 47, wherein the refractory component is selected from a group consisting of support posts, support beams, support plates, and containers.

Claim 49 (Canceled)

50. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the crystalline phase includes said aluminosilicate, said aluminosilicate comprising mullite, said mullite having a composition  $3\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2$ .

Claims 51-56 (Canceled)

57. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have an aspect ratio not less than about 3:1.

58. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have an aspect ratio not less than about 5:1.

59. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have a crystal size within a range of about 0.2 to about 20 microns.

60. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have a crystal size within a range of about 0.5 to about 10 microns.

61. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the amorphous matrix phase comprises said silica and about 10 wt% to about 50 wt% alumina.

62. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 61, wherein the amorphous phase comprises at least about 12 wt% alumina.

63. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the oxide layer is a surface layer.

64. (Canceled)

65. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the oxide layer is alumina rich, having not less than 5 wt% more alumina than an alumina content in the ~~nitride bonded silicon carbide ceramic body~~.

66. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim 65, wherein the oxide layer has not less than 7 wt% more alumina than an alumina content in the ~~nitride bonded silicon carbide ceramic body~~.

Claims 67-69 (Canceled)

70. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 61, wherein the amorphous matrix phase comprises not greater than about 25 wt% alumina.

Claims 71-81 (Canceled)